



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

REPRESENTATIVE FRED CAMILLO
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RANKING MEMBER
COMMERCE COMMITTEE

MEMBER
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

TESTIMONY

In support of H.B. 5053 AAC Volunteer Fire Police Patrols.

Planning And Development Committee
Wednesday, March 2, 2011

Dear Senator Cassano, Representative Gentile, Senator Fasano, Representative Aman and members of the Planning And Development Committee:

I am here today to testify in support of H.B. 5053.

Presently section 7-323r of the general statutes, entitled "Supplemental Grant Award Remittance Program for Volunteer Fire Companies Providing Services on Limited Access Highways or on the Berlin Turnpike or a Section of Route 8", authorizes the State Fire Administrator, within available funds, to administer a supplemental grant award remittance program to support local volunteer fire companies (emphasis added) that provide emergency response services on limited access highways, such as I-95, roadways like Route 15 (both running through my district, Greenwich, Connecticut); and certain other roadways.

The present statute further provides that: "... eligible fire companies (emphasis added) may receive direct payment of grant funds or may use the funds as credits for fee-based services provided by the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control" (also known as the "Fire Academy").

I have proposed that section 7-323r be amended to authorize the State Fire Administrator to expand a supplemental grant award remittance program to include volunteer fire police patrols (emphasis added) that provide emergency response services on limited access highways.

As Mr. Joseph Kaliko, President of the Cos Cob Fire Police Patrol, Inc. (a non-profit volunteer fire police patrol serving all of Greenwich and serving, via mutual aid agreements, surrounding communities,) will testify; volunteer fire police patrols save lives and property, while at the same time saving the state and municipalities considerable sums of money.

The need to protect the emergency service responders on these busy and dangerous highways; as well as accident victims, is a necessity and often a thankless task performed by these volunteers risking their lives; putting themselves in harm's way between on-coming high speed traffic and people working (or being rescued) at an accident scene.

Yet, the volunteer Fire Police Patrol's have been left out as a beneficiary of the token reimbursement or Fire Academy expense credits the statute offers, since historically many Fire Police Patrols were simply part of a "volunteer fire company". However, very active Fire Police Patrols, like the one in Cos Cob, may not be part of a volunteer fire company per se and have been denied the benefits of section 7-323r after having applied. Both the State Fire Administrator and former Attorney General Blumenthal have opined that the statute does not specifically include volunteer Fire Police Patrols; and thus needs to be amended if volunteer Fire Police Patrols are to receive any benefit thereunder.

While Governor Malloy's budget may have eliminated supplemental grants such as the one contemplated by section 7-323r altogether, it is respectfully submitted that the bill is worthy of consideration; and that the administration be asked to reconsider and sign it into law (including the amendment we are suggesting).

Statewide the program appropriation for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2010 was \$195,000 resulting in a grant of \$1,211 to each of the fire companies that applied. In fiscal year ending June 30, 2011 the program appropriation was \$105,000 in total; resulting in an estimated \$652 being available to each fire company that applies.

This sum of money appropriated for the benefit of our volunteer fire companies and volunteer fire police patrols who respond to incidents on our highways across the state, helps purchase much needed supplies and equipment. The money (or Fire Academy expense credits) is appreciated by those serving as a token of gratitude by the state for the savings enjoyed (by the state and municipalities alike), in situations where we are fortunate enough to have these volunteers attend to highway incidents. The savings in terms of lives, property and money, are substantial, in fact beyond measure if even one life is saved.

Particularly when used as an expense credit at the Fire Academy, the program funds are essentially returned to the state; and a firefighter is trained.

I therefore urge your support in amending section 7-323r as suggested; and presenting the bill the Governor for his further consideration (or reconsideration) and signature.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Fred Camillo". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Fred Camillo
State Representative
151st District